(b) if so, the details of the proposal;

(c) whether works have been initiated on the proposal;

(d) if not, the reasons for the delay; and

(e) the time by when the work is expected to begin along with the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No, Sir. There is no proposal for setting up of a wagon factory in Kerala. However, a MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) has been signed between Ministry of Railways and Department of Industries and Commerce, Government of Kerala (which owns Steel Industries Kerala Ltd.) to form a Joint Venture Company for fabrication of bogie frames of ICF design coaches and side/end walls etc. for wagons.

(b) to (e) Do not arise.

Survey for laying of new railway lines

†116. DR. PRABHA THAKUR : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of proposals of survey work for laying new railway lines has been included in the railway budget of the year 2008-09;

(b) the time limit set for completion of survey work of the above new railway lines; and

(c) the figures of the railway network in the country State-wise and the position of Rajasthan in comparison to other States alongwith the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) 37 surveys for New Board Gauge Lines have been included in the Railway Budget 2008-09. The surveys are normally planned for completion within 2-3 years depending upon the availability of manpower and resources.

(c) Detailed State-wise route kms. of Railway lines at the end of 2006-07 is given in the Railway Year Book 2006-07 which is distributed alongwith Railway Budget Documents.

Double stack container on Kandla-Bhatinda rail line

117. SHRI VIJAYKUMAR RUPANI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of Gujarat has submitted a proposal in February, 2008 regarding providing facility of double stack container towards Kandla-Bhiladi-Samdari-Jodhpur-Bhatinda railway line; and

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereto and the present status of the proposal?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Levy of safety surcharge

118. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indian Railways have come under criticism of Parliamentary Standing Committee for continuing to levy safety surcharge subsumed in the actual fare as development fund from the passengers even after its expiry on 31st March, 2007;

(b) if so, what are main points mentioned by the Parliamentary Committee;

(c) whether Railways have considered these suggestions;

(d) if so, what are main reasons for charging this amount after expiry:

(e) whether Railways is considering to discontinue the same; and

(f) if so, by when final decision in this regard is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (c) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Committee noted that the Railways have subsumed the safety surcharge in the passenger tariff for part funding of the Dedicated Freight Corridor and other infrastructure projects and expressed their disapproval of the same. They strongly recommended that this practice should not be adopted by the Railways and that the Ministry should review the decision taken to replace the safety surcharge with development charge.

(d) The main reason for subsuming the safety surcharge in the passenger tariff is the fact that despite increase in input costs and wholesale price index, there has been no increase in passenger fares since 2002-03. On the contrary, passenger fares have been reduced in the last few successive Railway Budgets. The massive expansion required in rail infrastructure both for meeting passenger and freight needs, in synchronization with the requirement of the growing economy, has placed considerable burden on the Railways are also not getting adequate gross budgetary support and are increasingly relying on internal generation and market borrowing for financing crucial infrastructure. As market borrowing becomes more and more expensive, it would be difficult for the Railways to consider withdrawal of the Development Charge.

(e) No, Sir.

(f) Does not arise.